



HELPING GIRLS MANAGE MENSTRUATION

CARE is an international humanitarian aid organisation fighting global poverty, with a special focus on working with women and girls to bring lasting change to their communities. As a non-religious and non-political organisation, CARE works with communities to help overcome poverty by supporting development projects and providing emergency relief. We believe supporting women and girls is one of the most effective ways to create sustainable change in communities.

Why Menstrual Hygiene Management matters

In parts of Vanuatu, an estimated 75% of girls miss up to three days of school each month¹ because they have their period.

Girls often don't have access to safe, private toilet facilities at school and they often can't afford to buy commercial sanitary pads, making do with rags or even leaves instead, which are unreliable as well as unhygienic. They are afraid of blood leakages and of being humiliated.

Cultural taboos that discourage girls and women from various activities, including cooking, during menstruation also contribute to a general belief that periods are unclean. People don't like to talk about periods or the reproductive system in general, and a lack of knowledge compounds the problem.

Girls have a right to good health, equal education opportunities, adequate water and sanitation, productive employment and sustainable consumption—and they need to be able to manage menstrual hygiene to realise them.

MENSTRUATION + THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

-  **Goal 3:** Health and wellbeing for all at all ages.
-  **Goal 4:** Inclusive and equitable education for all.
-  **Goal 5:** Gender equality and empowered women and girls.
-  **Goal 6:** Sustainable water and sanitation for all.
-  **Goal 8:** Inclusive and sustainable economic growth.
-  **Goal 12:** Sustainable consumption and production patterns.

HOW MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT MAKES A DIFFERENCE



MHM protects girls from violence

30% of ni-Vanuatu women have been sexually abused before the age of 15. Using public toilets, even at school, can be dangerous. Being able to use a toilet that has locks can be a game changer.



MHM tackles gender inequality

Ensuring girls have the same opportunities as boys to go to school is an important building block for equality in the future, as well as today.



MHM helps combat teenage pregnancy

Vanuatu has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in the Pacific², translating to higher levels of unemployment, poverty and infant mortality. Better knowledge about reproductive rights and family planning can help change the statistics.

What CARE is doing about Menstrual Hygiene Management

CARE's Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) project is designed to break down the stigma surrounding girls' menstruation, while educating girls on their changing bodies and providing a hygienic and sanitary learning environment.

CARE distributes MHM kits, which include reusable pads, soap, buckets and underwear, to girls aged 10 and above through half-day MHM awareness sessions at schools, which provide the facts about the menstrual cycle and reproductive system. In these schools, CARE also builds latrines with dedicated MHM facilities—a tap inside a private cubicle—so that girls can clean themselves and their reusable pads in a safe and private environment.

CARE has partnered with a ni-Vanuatu social enterprise, Mamma's Laef, on the MHM project. Mamma's Laef is a women's social enterprise that sews the reusable pads and delivers and trains other trainers in the MHM awareness sessions. The partnership enables CARE to deliver specialised and localised training while supporting a women's cooperative that provides an important source of income for their households, building women's economic empowerment.

THE MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT PROJECT

1 Lockable latrines with washing facilities

Ventilated Improved Pit latrines are constructed in schools, with locking doors and separate facilities for boys and girls. The girls' latrines include a tap and washing area inside.

2 MHM kits

MHM kits including reusable sanitary pads, laundry soap, handwashing soap, a bucket and underwear are distributed through schools.

3 MHM learning sessions

Half-day learning sessions for girls are conducted at school, providing the facts about the menstrual cycle and the reproductive system.



“ Before, when I got my period, I did not go to school. I was afraid of being humiliated, so I just stayed at home.

I was trying to understand things myself and then CARE came and explained everything to us. I feel like now I know everything.

Now when I get my period, I am not worried. I am not afraid anymore. ”

Florence, 17 years old
Tanna Island.

¹Oxfam study, 2016; ²Vanuatu Women's Centre, 2011.; ³ UNFP, 2011; ⁴UNICEF 2013; ⁵WASH United, 2017.

CARE International in Vanuatu

PO Box 1129, Port Vila | Rue De Quai, Elluk Road, Namba 3, Port Vila
+678 22951
care.org.au/Vanuatu